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XVIII.—*Remarks on Dr. A. Leith Adams's "Notes and Observations on the Birds of Egypt and Nubia."* By S. STAFFORD ALLEN.

HAVING myself paid a good deal of attention to Egyptian ornithology, I may perhaps be permitted to make a few remarks on the interesting paper communicated by Dr. A. Leith Adams to the first Number of 'The Ibis' for the present year, since it must be obvious to all that, by thus comparing notes upon any given point, we shall arrive at more certain conclusions than would otherwise be the case.

With most of Dr. Adams's remarks I cordially agree ; but on those points where my opinion differs from his, it must be borne in mind that, though greatly less experienced as an observer, I have had more extended opportunities for observation, having spent four seasons in Egypt, engaged in collecting and studying birds. Nor have my wanderings been limited to the Nile Valley, though they include two voyages up to the First Cataract, as I have seen a good deal of those parts of the country usually left unvisited by winter travellers, amongst which are the Faioum and (more especially) the Delta. Having also besides, by degrees, picked up a tolerable knowledge of Arabic, I have been enabled to communicate directly with the natives—always a matter of importance in these investigations.

I propose to place at the end of these remarks a concise list

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of the species which have come under my notice, reserving for a future opportunity detailed accounts of interesting kinds. Most of them were shot by myself, and, where that was not the case, by persons with whom I was well acquainted, who gave me an opportunity of examining the specimens, either in the flesh or recently skinned. A few species noted, which I had not seen elsewhere, were amongst the supplies of game and wild-fowl brought for sale to the market in Alexandria.

As I am now likely to be resident in Egypt for the greater portion of the next two or three years, I may hope not only to add very considerably to this list, but to obtain interesting information on the points alluded to by Dr. Adams respecting seasonal migration, &c.

BUTEO RUFINUS, Rüpp.

BUTEO VULGARIS.

The Common Buzzard certainly does not deserve that appellation in Egypt. I shot one in the Delta in March 1861, which is the only time I have seen it here. The former species is rather common, varies greatly in plumage, and is a most dangerous bird to meddle with when wounded. I have seen an Arab nearly faint with the pain when, having incautiously approached to secure the bird, it buried all four of its powerful talons in his hand, from which they were not easily disengaged.

CIRCAËTUS GALLICUS.

This species is by no means rare in Egypt, and prefers the open country. Might not this have been the bird Mr. Adams saw and alludes to (p. 9)?

MILVUS ÆGYPTIUS (Gm.).

MILVUS ATER (Gm.).

I cannot agree with Dr. Leith Adams in what he says about these birds. The Black Kite is certainly the commoner bird in the Nile Valley above Cairo, though I believe a close examination would show that the Arabian is there too in considerable numbers. In the Delta, however, the reverse is the case; for of the hundreds I have seen close, and the dozens I have shot, chiefly in order to identify their eggs, there was not a single *M. ater*. In the neighbourhood of Cairo, where these birds are particu-

larly abundant, feeding upon the refuse of the slaughter-houses and any other carrion they can get hold of, the numbers are pretty equally divided, being, if anything, in favour of *M. ægyptius*.

The Arabian Kite may be seen breeding in any village in the Delta with the most complete fearlessness. A pair nested annually in a tree in the court of the house where I resided in Cairo, which enabled me to study their domestic economy to great advantage. The waxy-yellow bill and red colour readily distinguish the adult birds of this species; but the young are easily confounded with *M. ater* by any one not accustomed to them.

ELANUS MELANOPTERUS

I found equally common, at least as high up as Thebes (where several were seen and shot), as it is in the Delta. It is said to breed in the Mokattam Hills, behind Cairo, but I have never yet been able to meet with the nest. The iris in the immature specimen is of a bright salmon-colour, in the adult of a brilliant carmine-red; and this bird, when recently shot, with its pure white breast, delicate dove-coloured back, and black shoulders, is an exquisitely beautiful object, though the soft, Owl-like feathers of the face and throat and breast invariably lose their delicate gloss when the skin has been prepared some days. This species is crepuscular in its habits, feeding largely on mice and beetles, as well as on small birds. It has the sclerotic ring of the eye very deep, and altogether shows strong *Strigine* affinities.

TINNUNCULUS ALAUDARIUS.

TINNUNCULUS CENCHRIS.

The Kestrel (which, by the way, runs much smaller in size than British or Maltese specimens), as Dr. Adams observes, is excessively abundant in Egypt, and breeds in April, choosing for that purpose palm-trees, sycamores, or old ruins, particularly the half-ruined "koubbehs" or mosque-tombs of Arab saints, which are of frequent occurrence.

Its near relation, the Lesser Kestrel, is not seen in winter, but comes northward in March and April in flocks, often associated

with *Erythropus vespertinus* (Linn.), with which it seems to have considerable affinity. I have observed in the former species (*T. cenchris*) that the sexes appear to keep separate in their peregrinations, the females decidedly preponderating in numbers. The reverse is the case with the elegant little Merlin, which Dr. Adams seems not to have met with. Stragglers are seen occasionally during the winter months, but in March and April it is rather a common bird. The birds shot in Egypt are almost invariably males, as I have only seen two females out of dozens shot by myself and others.

CIRCUS PALLIDUS (Sykes).

CIRCUS CYANEUS.

CIRCUS CINERACEUS (Mont.).

All these Harriers are found in Egypt, the first being the most abundant. The females of the two former species differ so slightly that it is very difficult to distinguish them; but the male birds are easily recognizable. Of *C. cineraceus*, all the specimens I obtained were females, which sex has greatly the advantage of numbers in all three species.

STRIX FLAMMEA.

BRACHYOTUS ÆGOLIUS (Bp.).

BUBO ASCALAPHUS.

ATHENE MERIDIONALIS (Risso).

I have shot all these four species of Owls in Egypt, where all, except the Short-eared, are resident throughout the year. The latter comes in April.

It is rather surprising that the little *Scops zorca* (Bp.), so abundant in passing at Malta, should not be found in Egypt.

CAPRIMULGUS ISABELLINUS, Rüpp.

This is not a common bird in Egypt, and I found it for the first time last year in the Faioum, where they inhabited cracks and excavations in the earth. I procured two distinct varieties, one much darker than the other. As evening approached, they would make their appearance, flitting about upon noiseless wing, like ghosts in the twilight, and at intervals emitting a subdued croaking cry. I suspect that *C. europæus* is here also, as I once

found a wing and feathers of a bird killed by a Hawk which appeared to be those of a Common Goatsucker.

HIRUNDO CAHIRICA, Licht.

HIRUNDO RUSTICA.

The Oriental Chimney Swallow is common throughout the winter in Egypt; but in April the true *H. rustica* makes its appearance, and then the two species are frequently seen together. I think this fact is a strong argument in favour of their specific difference. The white of all the specimens of our Chimney Swallow is tinged, more or less, with rust-colour.

ALCEDO ISPIDA.

CERYLE RUDIS (Boie).

I have seen the Common Kingfisher as far up the river as Thebes and Ermeut, but only as a straggler. It is common in Lower Egypt during the winter months, particularly near Cairo, frequenting the little canals and pools, which it evidently prefers to the open river. I have taken the eggs of the Black and White Kingfisher, in April, near Damietta, where many pairs were breeding. Dr. Adams says, December, but there is often a very marked difference in the time of nesting of birds of the same species in Upper and Lower Egypt. Is Dr. Adams correct in calling this species the *Belted* Kingfisher?

PHYLLOPNEUSTE TROCHILUS.

PHYLLOPNEUSTE RUFA.

PHYLLOPNEUSTE SIBILATRIX.

PHYLLOPNEUSTE BONELLII.

Of these little Warblers, the two first are winter residents, the Chiff-chaff especially being very common, whilst the two latter make their appearance in the spring, as do the greater part of the small insectivorous birds, *Sylviidae* and others.

RUTICILLA TITHYS (Scop.).

RUTICILLA PHÆNICURA.

The Black Redstart is plentiful in the gardens round Cairo in the winter months, but out of about twenty specimens I only got two males. The Common Redstart is not seen during the winter, but comes from the southward in April.

SAXICOLA LUGENS.

SAXICOLA PALLIDA.

SAXICOLA DESERTI, Rüpp.

SAXICOLA ÆNANTHE.

SAXICOLA STAPAZINA.

SAXICOLA AURITA.

SAXICOLA ISABELLINA, Rüpp.

The Chats find a congenial home in Egypt, and consequently abound here, not only in species, but in numbers. The first, *S. lugens*, is found more or less commonly, in suitable places, from Cairo upwards. The two next belong rather to Upper Egypt, particularly *S. pallida*, my specimen of which, with others, was obtained by my friend J. H. Cochrane at Thebes. The only Wheatear found near Cairo (or rather Ghizeh) in winter is *S. isabellina* of Rüppell, described by Bree under the name of *S. saltatrix*, and which Dr. Adams seems to have mistaken for *S. ænanthe*, ♀.

The true *S. ænanthe* appears in March and April in the locality mentioned above, together with *S. stapazina* and *S. aurita*. When the two birds are compared, *S. isabellina* will be found to be a larger and heavier bird altogether, with marked differences of bill, tarsus, &c. Last spring I made a very complete series of the last four species, in the neighbourhood of Ghizeh. I have also found the plain of Thebes a particularly good place for those Chats peculiar to the upper country.

PETROCINCLA CYANEA.

PETROCINCLA SAXATILIS.

I am surprised that Dr. Adams did not find the Blue Thrush at all events tolerably common. I have shot as many as four or five in a morning, about Medinet Haboo, and have constantly seen them in various other places, mostly among ruins or where excavations had been carried on.

Its congener, the Rock Thrush, comes northward in the end of April, and evinces a very strong partiality for Arab burying-grounds, where one or two are always to be found at that season of the year. The plumage of two or three males, shot near Ghizeh last year, was far finer than any among a large series of Maltese specimens.

CORVUS UMBRINUS, Hedenborg.

The Raven of Egypt belongs to this permanent variety, if it be not a distinct species. All the specimens I have examined are constant in having the umber-brown head and shoulders, whilst the eggs differ considerably from those of *C. corax*.

I tormented myself very considerably, last April, in the vain attempt to rear a hopeful family of five young Ravens, which appeared to be all mouth and stomach, for nothing came amiss to them. They, however, all came to an untimely end from (as it appeared to me) a mixture of *coup de soleil* and camel-riding. I have never seen the Raven in flocks as Dr. Adams speaks of, or otherwise than in pairs; but have occasionally observed large flocks of what I took to be Rooks in the Delta, though unable to shoot one to identify it.

PASSER DOMESTICUS.

PASSER SALICICOLA.

These two species are about equally common in Egypt; nor do they always keep separate, as, in firing into a flock, I have killed specimens of both. Those of the former which I have taken home for comparison have proved smaller than the usual English birds—a peculiarity which is very distinctly observable in the case of many species common to both countries. On one occasion I found a nest of *P. domesticus* built in that of a Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), some four feet inside the river-bank; and when the Sparrow's nest was removed, the *eggs* of the original possessor were found underneath.

TURTUR SENEGALENSIS (Bonap.).

TURTUR AURITUS (Ray).

The Palm Dove remains in Egypt all the year round, and is exceedingly tame and familiar. It breeds in the groves of orange- and lemon-trees in the Delta, but even more frequently in the dilapidated woodwork of houses, or even in the rooms themselves. In the house where I lived in Cairo, a pair of these Doves would insist upon building their nest on a cornice near the ceiling, in spite of attempts to keep them out or dislodge them, much to the vexation of the lady of the house.

The Common Turtle comes down in flocks from the upper

country in spring, and is highly esteemed by the French, Maltese, and Levantine sportsmen, who distinguish them from the resident species by the name of "Tortorelli di Passo."

PTEROCLES EXUSTUS.

PTEROCLES CORONATUS (Licht.).

PTEROCLES GUTTATUS (Licht.).

The first of these Sand-Grouse is abundant both in Upper and Lower Egypt, and often found in very large flocks, the other two species being less common. I shot a pair (♂ and ♀) of *P. coronatus* at El Kab, out of a small flock which came down to drink at one of the pools. Their cry was rather hoarser than the "shrill guttural croak" of the commoner species, which it nevertheless much resembled. Though generally shy, the Sand-Grouse (*P. exustus*) will sometimes lie very close, and, until acquainted with their habits, it is almost impossible to distinguish them, even when lying on the bare surface of the ground. What you take for half-a-dozen stones suddenly start into life, and fly off with amazing rapidity.

I think Dr. Leith Adams must have been misinformed when he says that *P. exustus* breeds in June, as I obtained two eggs, and the live female bird, which had been caught on them, in April last year.

HOPLOPTERUS SPINOSUS.

Most Nile travellers who have paid attention to the subject will agree with Dr. Adams in thinking that the "Zic-zac" proper has better claims to the honour of being the "*Trochilos*" of Herodotus than *Pluvianus aegyptius*. I cannot say that I ever heard the additional legend he gives as current amongst the Nile boatmen. The bird is known among Europeans as "Spy" and "Espion" from its wary habits, and "Dominicain" from its black-and-white plumage.

IBIS RELIGIOSA.

I have not been more successful than Dr. Adams in finding any evidence of the presence of this bird in Egypt, though I have heard of *Ibis falcinellus*.

SCOLOPAX MAJOR.

SCOLOPAX GALLINAGO.

SCOLOPAX GALLINULA.

RHYNCHÆA BENGALENSIS.

I shot the Great Snipe in May 1863 at Damietta, but it is a rare bird. The Common and Jack Snipes are abundant during the winter in Lower Egypt and in the Faïoum, and a few may be met with in suitable localities here and there up the river. They leave Egypt about the middle of March. The Painted Snipe, though now and then found up the river, is at home in the N.E. corner of the Delta, near Damietta, where it breeds about the end of May. What, if any, is the difference between *R. bengalensis* and *R. capensis*?*

HIMANTOPUS MELANOPTERUS.

RECURVIROSTRA AVOCETTA.

Stragglers of the former species are occasionally seen in Upper Egypt; but they are very numerous in the Delta and also in the Faïoum, where they are found in small flocks wading about the pools which are the invariable accompaniment of every Arab village. The same holds good to some extent of the Avocet, though that bird prefers the sand-banks and shallows in the river.

CASARCA RUTILA.

TADORNA VULPANSER.

Not common; once obtained at Esné. The Common Shel-drake is often brought to market in Alexandria, but I have never seen it up the country.

ANAS BOSCHAS.

ANAS STREPERA.

RHYNCHASPIS CLYPEATA.

DAFILA ACUTA.

MARECA PENELOPE.

FULIGULA FERINA.

NYROCA LEUCOPHTHALMA.

QUERQUEDULA CIRCIA.

QUERQUEDULA CRECCA.

All these Ducks are more or less abundant, being found in large flocks on the sand-banks in the river, or scattered in smaller

* We believe them to be identical (cf. Swinhoe, P. Z. S. 1863, p. 314).
—ED.

parties about the inland marshy pools and canals. But the localities beyond all others favoured by them are the large, shallow, brackish lakes, surrounded by marshes, which extend at intervals all along the coast, from Alexandria to Port Said (near the site of the ancient Pelusium), the most important being Lakes Mareotis, Etoko, Bourlos, and last, but not least, Menzaleh, on which the town of Damietta stands. To the three last of these lakes, particularly, immense numbers of Ducks resort, which suffer no perceptible diminution from the efforts of the Arabs of the neighbouring villages, many of whom make their living by snaring and netting them for sale.

In consequence of the increasing demand for game and wild-fowl in Alexandria, and the high prices given, Lake Mareotis swarms with "pot-hunting gunners," whose never-ceasing noise and worry are fast driving the Ducks away from their favourite haunts in that neighbourhood, to seek less disturbed quarters elsewhere. The poor Coots, which apparently have not enough sense, or too much love of home, to follow their example, stand a fair chance of being exterminated, in spite of their numbers, before long, as they are massacred and brought to market by sackfuls at a time.

LARUS FUSCUS.

LARUS ARGENTATUS.

Dr. Leith Adams appears to have given the name of the Lesser Black-backed, through inadvertence, for that of the Herring-Gull. The former, however, is here, and is common near Damietta, though I have never observed it inland.

RHYNCHOPS ORIENTALIS, Rüpp.

SYLOCHELIDON CASPIA, Brehm.

GELOCHELIDON ANGLICA, Brehm.

STERNULA MINUTA, Boie.

HYDROCHELIDON HYBRIDA, Bp.

STERNA, sp. ?

Of five species of Terns hitherto noticed, the Gull-billed is the only one that I have seen far inland. All the others are more or less common in the lower part of the Delta, particularly in the neighbourhood of Damietta and Lake Menzaleh. I feel

confident that a close examination would show that, at the least, five or six more species of Terns, most of which breed here, frequent the same localities.

I once saw the curious Scissor-bill a little below Thebes, but did not succeed in shooting it. It has also been killed at Damietta.

My remarks have extended to so much greater length than I had expected, that my list will have to be postponed a little while longer, during which time I may probably be able to add some more species to it. In conclusion, some apology is perhaps due for having kept pretty much to the ground touched upon by Dr. Leith Adams in his paper; but my excuse for having done so is the desire I felt to establish certain points, to correct others that seemed to require it, and, lastly, the necessity there was for adopting some plan for giving the most useful information within moderate limits.

XIX.—*Notes on Birds breeding in the Neighbourhood of Sydney.*

By E. P. RAMSAY, Esq., of Dobroyde.

[Continued from vol. v. p. 447.]

6. The YELLOW-TUFTED HONEY-EATER (*Ptilotis auricomis*, Gould, B. Austr. iv. pl. 37.).

The Yellow-tufted Honey-eater, although very common about Sydney, is perhaps one of the most beautiful species we have; nor are the eggs of this species less beautiful than the birds themselves.

It gives preference to the more open underwood of young *Eucalyptus* and Wattle trees (*Acacia decurrens*), which are plentiful near Dobroyde, Enfield, and Paramatta, rather than to the dense scrubland nearer the coast. I have met with this species as far inland as Manar, between Braidwood and Goulburn, where, through the kind assistance of my young friend, Mr. Herbert Gordon, I procured several rare specimens both of birds and eggs. Like most of its tribe, the Yellow-tufted Honey-eater is very partial to fruit, and, during the latter end of February and throughout the month of March, the pear-trees with us swarm with this and many other species. During the orange-